

May's Gold Medal School of the Month Liberty Elementary

Principal: Connie Amos
School Coordinator: Mike Okumura
Mentor: Kim Kingery

The teachers and staff at Liberty Elementary believe wholeheartedly that they must lead by example. Not only do they walk the Gold Medal Mile with students at every opportunity; they also focus heavily on nutrition education and demonstrate good eating habits.

This year, as part of their Silver-level criteria, Liberty faculty and staff members were invited to participate in “Savor the Spectrum”, a program that encourages participants to eat a healthy number of fruits and vegetables over a 20-day period, and maintain a record of their eating habits during that time. During the program, Liberty faculty and staff members consumed nearly 1,500 servings of fruits and vegetables! Prizes were awarded to the participant who ate the largest number of servings, and to the participant who ate the largest variety of fruits and vegetables. Leslie Campbell, the school Librarian, was awarded one of the prizes for eating 136 servings of fruits and vegetables over 20 days! Third grade teacher Meg Kisselburg won the prize for eating the largest variety of fruits and vegetables; she consumed an amazing 46 different types during the contest. As one teacher explained, “The program really helped me to understand what I am eating, and I will remain more conscientious of the fruits and vegetables that I eat going forward.”

Faculty and staff dedication to good nutrition did not end with the conclusion of “Savor the Spectrum.” Connie Amos, Liberty’s principal, arranged a nutrition-based weight loss support group consisting of 20 faculty and staff members. All of the participants are very excited to be a part of the program. Not only will they be able to rely on their friends and co-workers for support; they will also have extra motivation to be successful in the program!



Liberty has also learned the importance of “thinking outside the box” when it comes to motivating students to walk the Gold Medal Mile. This year, if students reach the goal of walking 8,000 miles, Mike Okumura (fourth grade teacher and GMS School Coordinator) will wear a dress to school! The dress promotion was announced at Liberty’s kick-off assembly on September 11th and Leo the Lion, mascot of REAL Salt Lake, was there to maximize the students’ excitement. The goal has presented a bit of a challenge to the small enrollment at Liberty (which walked less than 4,000 miles last year), but the promotion has definitely been a success and the students are right on schedule to see Mr. Okumura in the very colorful, very feminine dress by the end of March. They have already walked nearly 10,000 miles this year!

The PTA and the community are also extremely dedicated to helping the students achieve their health and nutrition goals. Members of the Liberty PTA voted unanimously to fund the construction of a walking track for students to use while walking the Gold Medal Mile. The PTA funded the majority of the track, and Jenny Grosh, Murray District PE Specialist, arranged for the remainder of the funding. Says one parent, “My daughter actually *wants* to go to school early just so she can walk a couple of times around the track before the bell rings! And she’s not alone - every morning when I drop her off, I see a bunch of other kids walking, too!”



The construction of the path was celebrated in style. On October 3rd, Liberty hosted a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Family/Community Walk Event after school, with special guest State Representative Tim Cosgrove conducting the ribbon cutting. In addition to the advertising within the school, a local Boy Scout Troop delivered flyers to all homes surrounding Liberty in an effort to involve the community. The Liberty PTA also provided free bottles of water, and sponsored participation contests for all Liberty students. Between faculty and staff, students, family members, and community members, it is estimated that nearly 300 people participated in this memorable after-school event! Leo the Liberty Leopard, Liberty’s mascot, was even on hand to walk the new track with participants.

Liberty has also participated in a number of other health initiatives, including Red Ribbon Week and the Truth from Youth Ad Campaign. As Connie Amos, Liberty’s Principal, says, “Our students, staff, and community are truly committed to a healthier lifestyle.”